

# Why Recycle?

## Maine State Planning Office

### Waste Management & Recycling Program



Recycling is just one important strategy in the big picture of solid waste management. Recycling is effective because it allows individuals to be part of the solution by recycling at home and at work. We can use recycled and recyclable products, organize recycling programs, and encourage our neighbors to recycle. Just as we contribute to our nation's increasing garbage problem, we can all contribute to its solution by recycling. Listed below are some of the benefits of recycling:

### Local Environmental Benefits

The more that we recycle at home and at work, the more we reduce our reliance on landfilling and incineration. In other words, every ton of waste that we recycle reduces the threat of groundwater contamination from landfill leachate, reduces the problems associated with incinerator ash disposal and stack emissions, and reduces the need for additional disposal capacity in the state of Maine.

### Recycling Saves Natural Resources

Natural resources are limited and often difficult to extract from the earth. When products are made from recycled materials, manufacturers are using every tree, every gallon of oil, every pound of minerals to its maximum potential. If we use something just once and throw it away, we are wasting our precious natural resources.

### Recycling Saves Energy and Reduces Waste and Pollution

Manufacturing a product from “virgin” materials creates a lot of waste and pollution. Some of that waste goes into landfills or incinerators, some of it is released into the air, and still more goes into the water supply. Manufacturing the same products from recyclables rather than “virgin” materials saves energy and generates much less pollution.

<b>Table 1. Benefits from Substituting Secondary Materials for Virgin Resources (Percent Reduction)*</b>				
	<b>Paper</b>	<b>Glass</b>	<b>Steel</b>	<b>Aluminum</b>
Energy Use	23-74	4-32	47-74	90-97
Air Pollution	74	20	85	95
Water Pollution	35	--	76	97
Mining Wastes	--	80	97	--
Water Use	58	50	40	--

\*Source: Environmental Defense Fund

## **Economic Benefits**

Recycling and composting can save our communities money through: avoided disposal cost, extended landfill life, and the sale of recyclable commodities. A composting operation can also provide an inexpensive soil amendment to residents, replacing the need for more expensive soil conditioners

## **Recycling Creates Jobs**

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance in Washington, DC estimates that nine jobs are created for every 15,000 tons of solid waste recycled into a new product, and seven jobs for the same amount of yard trimmings composted. By contrast, only two jobs are created for every 15,000 tons incinerated, and just one job for every 15,000 tons sent to landfills.

## **Recycling Builds Environmental Ethic**

Active citizen participation is a necessary part of a recycling program. A successful program encourages citizens to clean up their environment, conserve natural resources, and extend disposal capacity. Recycling is one way that citizens can become more aware of the impact that their actions have on the local and global environment. Through recycling, we can all become more involved, caring citizens.

For more information, please contact:  
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